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## COMMODORE STOCKTON'S REPORT

The following document is a complete copy of Commodore Stockton's report of the battles fought in the vicinity of Los Angeles the 8th and 9th of January, 1847. It was copied direct from U. S. Senate Documents originally in possession of Senator Benton who gave them to Col. J. C. Fremont, and at the time the report was copied they were in the possession of Mrs. Jessie Benton Fremont.

The report was copied by Olof Ellison, a magazine writer, who presented it to the Historical Society February 6, 1893. It is published here to aid students of our local history. It is difficult for them to obtain access to early U. S. Documents.

It is not generally known that there was a company of native Californians in Stockton's army, and Flores' attack on Stockton's column with a band of wild mares was a military movement new to the Americans. Stockton greatly exaggerates the loss of the Californians. Their actual loss in the two battles, San Gabriel river and La Mesa was three killed and ten or twelve wounded. The killed were Ignacio Sepulveda, Francisco Rubio and El Guaynonco, a Yaqui Indian.

The battle of San Gabriel river was fought on the bluff of the old San Gabriel river nearly opposite the Pio Pico house. The ford where Stockton's army crossed was formerly known as the Pico Crossing. The new San Gabriel river did not exist at that time. It was made in the great flood of 1868.

The Californians call this engagement the battle of Paso de Bartolo, which is much the better name. The battle of the plains of the La Mesa was fought at a ravine, the Canada de Los Alisos, near the southeastern corner of Los Angeles city. The Californians call it the battle of La Mesa, which is certainly a better name than that given it by Stockton. The battle of the Plain or the Plain.

J. M. GUINN, *Editor*.

UNITED STATES FRIGATE CONGRESS,

Harbor of San Diego, February 5, 1847.

Sir:—

I had the honor to write to you on the 11th of January by my aid-de-camp, Lieutenant Gray, informing you of the victories gained, on the 8th and 9th of January, over the insurgent army by the forces under my command; that the insurrection had been put down, and

peace and tranquility restored throughout the territory; that we had again taken possession of the Cuidad de Los Angeles; that our flag was once more flying in all parts of California; and that the civil government, formed by me last September, was in successful operation.

I now proceed (as it is my duty to do) to give you a more detailed and circumstantial account of the battles of the 8th and 9th, as well as of the preparations which preceded them. We came to San Diego with the Congress alone, her resources having been almost exhausted in a previous campaign. The town was besieged by the insurgents, and there were no stores or provisions of any kind in it, and we were reduced to one-fourth allowance of bread. We had to build a fort to mount our artillery—to make our saddles and bridles and harness; we had, in truth, to make our army, with all its necessary appendages, out of the mechanics and sailors of this ship, and to take our horses and beef cattle from the enemy.

The industry, perseverance and hard work, as well as enterprise and courage necessary for such operations, do not need my poor commendation.

We commenced our march on the 29th of December, with Captain Turner's company of 1st dragoons, dismounted, aided by Lieutenant Davidson; six pieces of artillery, under Lieutenant R. L. Tilghman and Passed Midshipman William H. Thompson; Captain Gillespie's squadron of mounted riflemen, acting as the advance, the rear and vanguards; the marines of the Congress and Portsmouth, under Captain J. Zeillin, adjutant of the battalion; the musketeers of the Congress, Savannah, Cyane and Portsmouth, commanded by Lieutenant William B. Renshaw, Passed Midshipman John Guest, Acting Lieutenants B. F. B. Hunter and Edward Higgins, aided by Midshipman George E. Morgan, J. Van Ness Philip, Theodore Lee, Albert Allmand, B. F. Wells, Edward C. Grafton, Robert C. Duvall and Phillip H. Haywood, and William Simmons, commodore's clerk; the carbineers of the Congress and Cyane, under the orders of Passed Midshipman J. M. Duncan and J. Fenwick Stenson, and Sailmaker Reed, aided by Midshipman Joseph Parich and Edmund Shepherd—in all a strength of about six hundred men. Brigadier General Kearny commanding the division, and Lieutenant S. C. Rowan, from the ship Cyane, major of brigade; Captain W. H. Emory, of the topographical engineers, acting adjutant general; Lieutenant George Minor, of the Savannah, quartermaster, in charge of the transportation, aided by Mr. Daniel Fisher. Mr. Speiden, the purser of the Congress, performed the duties of commissary, aided by Mr. John Bidwell. Mr. Southwick, carpenter of the Congress, acted as chief engineer at the head of the sappers and miners. Dr. John S. Griffin, of the army, Dr. Andrew A. Henderson, of the Portsmouth, and

Dr. Charles Eversfield, of the Congress, attended the troops. Lieutenant A. F. V. Gray and Captain Miguel de Pedrovena, aids-de-camp to the commander-in-chief.

Our men were badly clothed, and their shoes generally made by themselves out of canvass. It was very cold, and the roads heavy. Our animals were all poor and weak, some of them giving out daily, which gave much hard work to the men in dragging the heavy carts, loaded with ammunition and provisions, through deep sand and up steep ascents, and the prospect before us was far from being that which we might have desired; but nothing could break down the fine spirits of those under my command, or cool their readiness and ardor to perform their duty; and they went through the whole march of one hundred and forty-five miles with alacrity and cheerfulness.

During the day of our march to the Coyotes, we learned that some of the enemy were in our rear following us; and as we approached the Coyotes several of them made their appearance in front of the house upon the hill, and waved their lances in angry defiance; but on the approach of the advance guard, they rode off and left us to encamp on the hill near the house without molestation.

Being quite satisfied that we were in the neighborhood of the enemy, during the night a confidential person was sent to ascertain, if possible, their position; he returned and informed me that the enemy were in force between us and the "Rio San Gabriel," and I was satisfied that the enemy intended at last to make a stand against us, and to fight us on the 8th day of January. The day suited me. Before moving that morning, the arms were fired and reloaded, and each officer and man was assigned his position for the fight, and was reminded that it was the 8th day of January and the *anniversary* of the battle of New Orleans.

We marched at nine o'clock. Immediately on reaching the plain we formed a square, our baggage packs, spare oxen and beef cattle, in the center. The advance guard under Captain Hensley, company C, first dragoons, under Captain Turner, and company D, musketeers of the Cyane, under acting Lieutenant Higgins, occupied the center, with two pieces of artillery on each flank under Lieutenant Tilghman. The right flank composed of marines, company C, musketeers of the Portsmouth, Acting Lieutenant Hunter; company C, carbineers, Passed Midshipman Duncan; company A, carbineers of the Cyane, Acting Master Stenson; and company A, carbineers of the Congress, Sailmaker Peco; the whole under command of Captain Zeilin. The left flank composed of company B, musketeers of the Savannah, company A, musketeers of the Congress, under Acting Master Guest; the whole under the command of Captain Renshaw. The rear composed of two pieces of Artillery, under Act-

ing Master Wm. H. Thompson. The guard of the day, forty-nine strong, under Midshipman Haywood; one company mounted riflemen, under Lieutenant Renshaw; and Captain Santiago E. Arguello's company of Californians, under Lieutenant Luis Arguello; the whole under the command of Captain Gillespie. When within about two miles of the "Rio San Gabriel," the enemy appeared in sight upon the hills on the opposite side; they were six hundred in number, in three divisions, their right about two miles down the river. As we approached, our column closed up and moved steadily on toward the ford, when, within a quarter of a mile of the river, a halt was ordered and dispositions made to meet the enemy.

A detachment of marines, under Lieutenant H. B. Watson, was sent to strengthen the left flank of the square. A party of the enemy, one hundred and fifty strong, had now crossed the river and made several ineffectual attempts to drive a band of wild mares upon the advance party. We now moved forward to the ford in broken files; Captain Hensley's command was ordered to dismount, and, acting as skirmishers, it deployed to the front and crossed the stream (which was about fifty yards in width), driving before them a party of the enemy which had attempted to annoy us. The enemy had now taken their position upon the heights, distant six hundred yards from the river, and about fifty feet above its level; their centre or main body, about two hundred strong, was stationed immediately in front of the ford, upon which they opened a fire from two pieces of artillery, throwing round and grape shot without effect. Their right and left wings were separated from the main body about three hundred yards. Our column halted upon the edge of the stream; at this time the guns were unlimbered to return the enemy's fire, but were ordered again to be limbered and not a gun to be fired until the opposite bank of the river was gained. The two 9-pounders, dragged by officers as well as men and mules, soon reached the opposite bank, when they were immediately placed in battery. The column now followed in order under a most galling fire from the enemy, and became warmly engaged on the opposite bank, their round shot and grape falling thickly amongst us as we approached the stream, without doing any injury, our men marching steadily forward. The dragoons and Cyane's musketeers occupying the centre, soon crossed and formed upon a bank about four feet above the stream. The left advancing at the same time, soon occupied its position across the river.

The rear was longer in getting across the water; the sand being deep, its passage was delayed by the baggage carts; however, in a few moments the passage of the whole force was effected with only one man killed and one wounded, notwithstanding the enemy kept up an incessant fire from the heights.

On taking a position on a low bank, the right flank, under Captain Zeilin, was ordered to deploy to the right; two guns from the rear was immediately brought to the right; the four-pounder, under Acting Master Thompson, supported by the riflemen under Lieutenant Renshaw. The left flank deployed into line in open order. During this time our artillery began to tell upon the enemy, who continued their fire without interruption. The nine-pounders, standing in plain view upon the bank, were discharged with such precision that it soon became too warm for the enemy to remain upon the brow of their heights; eventually a shot told upon their nine-pounder, knocked the gun from its trail, astounding the enemy so much that they left it for four or five minutes. Some twenty of them now advanced, and hastily fastening ropes to it, dragged the gun to the rear. Captain Hensley's skirmishers now advanced and took the hill upon the right, the left wing of the enemy retreating before them. The six-pounder from the rear had now come up; Captain Hensley was ordered to support it, and returned from the hill. This movement being observed, the enemy's left made an attempt to charge the two guns, but the right flank of the marines, under Captain Zeilin, being quickly thrown back, showed too steady a front for the courage of the Californians to engage, who wheeled to the left and dashed to the rear across the river. At this time the enemy were observed collecting on our left, and making preparations to charge our left flank. General Kearny was now ordered to form a square with the troops on the right flank, upon which the left flank, in case of being worsted, might rally. The right wing of the enemy now made an unsuccessful attempt to charge our left, but finding so warm a reception from the musketeers of the Savannah and Congress, under Lieutenant Renshaw and Acting Master Guest, as also the small party of marines, under Lieutenant H. B. Watson, they changed their purpose and retired, when a discharge of artillery told upon their ranks. The guards of the day, under Midshipman Haywood, protected the animals in the rear, awaiting with patience for the enemy to give them an opportunity to open fire.

The disposition for charging the heights were now made. The troops having been brought into line, the command forward being given, on they went (the artillery in battery) charging the heights which the enemy's centre contested for a few moments; then broke in retreat; their right wing charging upon the rear, under Captain Gillespie, encumbered with packs, baggage, horses, and cattle, but receiving a well-directed fire from the guards, which hurled some of them from their saddles, they fled at full speed across the river we had just left. The other portion of their forces retreated behind their artillery, which had taken position in a ravine, and again opened its fire upon our centre; our artillery was immediately thrown for-

ward—the troops being ordered to lay down to avoid the enemy's cannon balls which passed directly over their heads.

The fire from our artillery was incessant, and so accurate that the enemy were from time to time driven from their guns, until they finally retreated.

We were now in possession of the heights, where, a short time before, the insurgents had so vauntingly taken strong position; and the band played "Hail Columbia" and "Yankee Doodle," announced another glorious victory on the 8th day of January.

Our loss in this action was ascertained to be two killed and nine wounded. The enemy's loss we could not ascertain with any certainty, as they carried away both killed and wounded upon their horses.

We moved down the heights until they brought us near the river, where we encamped, having our cattle, horses and mules under the bank, safely protected. Tattoo was beat at an early hour, and the camp retired to rest. At about 12 o'clock, the pickets having been fired upon, the camp was soon under arms in the most perfect order. Finding the enemy made no further demonstrations, after remaining under arms a short time, we again sought our blankets, and nothing disturbed our repose until the sounding of the reveille on the 9th told us to be stirring.

At daylight Captain Zeilin was dispatched with a party of thirty marines to a rancho about three-quarters of a mile from camp, to ascertain if there were any persons concealed about it, or whether there was any barley or provisions to be found there; finding none, he returned with his party about sunrise, without meeting any of the enemy.

At 9 o'clock our column commenced its march, taking a direct course over the plain of the Mesa, toward Ciudad de los Angeles. We advanced some six miles when the enemy appeared in front, deployed in open order, their line extending nearly across the road. Approaching a ravine to the left of their line in front, the enemy opened a fire from their artillery, masked upon the edge of the bank, but with no other effect than killing an ox and mule in the center of the square. Our artillery soon returned the fire while still continuing the march; the enemy now brought up two other pieces of artillery; our column halted; our artillery on the two flanks was now placed in battery. The six-pounder under Acting Master Thompson, upon the right flank, in the rear, now opened its fire upon the enemy's nine-pounder, the shot telling upon it and cutting away the fixtures about the gun at every fire. The enemy in front and upon the right was now distant about six hundred yards; the nine-pounders, one of them in charge of Mr. Southwick,

soon made it so warm for their artillery in front that the enemy bore it off to the rear.

A reenforcement now joined them, and soon after down they came upon us, charging upon the left flank, front and rear. A shower of lead from the musketry under Renshaw and Guest and Passed Midshipman Duncan's carbineers (who had today taken post on the left flank) being well delivered, at a distance of eighty yards, did so much havoc that their courage failed and caused them to draw off more to the rear, which had until this moment stood firm without firing a shot. The four-pounder now poured forth a charge of grape upon a party of the enemy about thirty yards distant, hurling four from their saddles, and they again retired.

The Californians now retreated, and we pursued our march along the mesa and crossed the Rio San Fernando (Rio Los Angeles) about three miles below the town, where we encamped for the night.

During the day we lost but one killed and five wounded, notwithstanding the shot from the enemy, both round and grape, and from the carbines of the horsemen, fell thick among our men who undauntingly pursued their march forward. On the 10th our tents were struck at an early hour, but the morning being cold and the town being distant but three miles, our march was delayed until about 10 o'clock.

We entered the city of the Angels, our band playing as we marched up the principal street to the square, our progress being slightly molested by a few drunken fellows who remained about the town. The riflemen, having been sent to the heights commanding the town, were soon followed by Lieutenant Tilghman, with two pieces of artillery, supported by the marines under Captain Zeilin, the enemy, in small force, retiring out of sight upon their approach.

Captain Gillespie, having received the order, now hoisted the same flag upon the government house of the country which he hauled down when he retreated from the city in September last.

Enclosed I send the report of our killed and wounded. Our loss was three killed and fourteen wounded; that of the enemy between seventy and eighty, besides many horses.

My narrative is done. Our friends and the territory have been rescued. I will only add that we had, of course, to simplify military tactics for our own use. We had, therefore, but five orders, viz: form line—form square—fire—repel charge—charge. The celerity and accuracy with which they could perform these evolutions were remarkable, and bade defiance even to the rapid movements of Californian cavalry.

I have thus truly exhibited to you, sir, sailors (who were principally armed with boarding pikes, carbines and pistols, having no more than about two hundred bayonets in the whole division), vic-



torious over an equal number of the best horsemen in the world, well mounted and well armed with carbines and pistols and lances. I have nothing to bestow on these officers and men for their heroism except my poor commendation, which I most sincerely give to them, individually and collectively. I must therefore recommend them to you for the greatest reward a patriot may claim—the approbation of their country.

Faithfully, your obedient servant,

R. F. STOCKTON,  
*Commander-in-chief.*

To the HON. GEORGE BANCROFT,  
*Secretary of the Navy, Washington, D. C.*